

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

- 1 1. A method for assigning functions between participants in a communications
2 arrangement comprising a plurality of participants, the method comprising the
3 steps of:
4 assigning, to a first participant from the plurality of participants, one or more
5 functions to be performed by the first participant;
6 prior to a failure of the first participant, designating a second participant from the
7 plurality of participants to perform the one or more functions if any of one
8 or more handoff criteria are satisfied; and
9 in response to any of the one or more handoff criteria being satisfied,
10 assigning the one or more functions to the second participant.
- 1 2. The method as recited in Claim 1, further comprising unassigning the one or more
2 functions from the first participant.
- 1 3. The method as recited in Claim 1, further comprising
2 prior to a failure of the second participant, designating a third participant from the
3 plurality of participants to perform the one or more functions if any of one
4 or more handoff criteria are satisfied; and
5 in response to any of the one or more handoff criteria being satisfied,
6 assigning the one or more functions to the third participant, and
7 unassigning the one or more functions from the second participant.

1 4. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the one or more functions include
2 initiating and controlling communications between the plurality of participants.

1 5. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein communications between the
2 participants are made on different frequencies over time.

1 6. The method as recited in Claim 5, wherein each participant from the plurality of
2 participants communicates with other participants during a particular time range.

1 7. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein each participant from the plurality of
2 participants communicates with other participants during a particular time range.

1 8. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the communications arrangement is a
2 wireless communications arrangement and the plurality of participants is a
3 plurality of wireless devices.

1 9. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the one or more handoff criteria
2 include a request from the first participant.

1 10. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the one or more handoff criteria
2 include the first participant not communicating within a specified amount of time.

- 1 11. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the one or more handoff criteria
2 include a failure of the first participant.
- 1 12. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the one or more handoff criteria
2 include the first participant being out of range of one or more other participants
3 from the plurality of participants.
- 1 13. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein:
2 the first participant is a master participant,
3 the second participant is a slave participant prior to being assigned to perform the
4 one or more functions, and
5 the second participant is an associate master participant after being designated to
6 perform the one or more functions if any of the one or more handoff
7 criteria are satisfied.
- 1 14. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the second participant is designated by
2 the first participant.
- 1 15. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the second participant is designated by
2 one or more participants from the plurality of participants.
- 1 16. A computer-readable medium carrying one or more sequences of one or more
2 instructions for assigning functions between participants in a communications
3 arrangement, the one or more sequences of one or more instructions including

4 instructions which, when executed by one or more processors, cause the one or
5 more processors to perform the steps of:
6 assigning, to a first participant from the plurality of participants, one or more
7 functions to be performed by the first participant;
8 prior to a failure of the first participant, designating a second participant from the
9 plurality of participants to perform the one or more functions if any of one
10 or more handoff criteria are satisfied; and
11 in response to any of the one or more handoff criteria being satisfied,
12 assigning the one or more functions to the second participant.

1 17. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 16, further comprising one or
2 more sequences of additional instructions which, when executed by the one or
3 more processors, cause the one or more processors to unassign the one or more
4 functions from the first participant.

1 18. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 16, further comprising one or
2 more sequences of additional instructions which, when executed by the one or
3 more processors, cause the one or more processors to
4 prior to a failure of the second participant, designating a third participant from the
5 plurality of participants to perform the one or more functions if any of one
6 or more handoff criteria are satisfied; and
7 in response to any of the one or more handoff criteria being satisfied,
8 assigning the one or more functions to the third participant, and
9 unassigning the one or more functions from the second participant.

1 19. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 16, wherein the one or more
2 functions include initiating and controlling communications between the plurality
3 of participants.

1 20. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 16, wherein communications
2 between the participants are made on different frequencies over time.

1 21. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 20, wherein each participant
2 from the plurality of participants communicates with other participants during a
3 particular time range.

1 22. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 16, wherein each participant
2 from the plurality of participants communicates with other participants during a
3 particular time range.

1 23. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 16, wherein the
2 communications arrangement is a wireless communications arrangement and the
3 plurality of participants is a plurality of wireless devices.

1 24. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 16, wherein the one or more
2 handoff criteria include a request from the first participant.

1 25. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 16, wherein the one or more
2 handoff criteria include the first participant not communicating within a specified
3 amount of time.

1 26. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 16, wherein the one or more
2 handoff criteria include a failure of the first participant.

1 27. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 16, wherein the one or more
2 handoff criteria include the first participant being out of range of one or more
3 other participants from the plurality of participants.

1 28. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 16, wherein:
2 the first participant is a master participant,
3 the second participant is a slave participant prior to being assigned to perform the
4 one or more functions, and
5 the second participant is an associate master participant after being designated to
6 perform the one or more functions if any of the one or more handoff
7 criteria are satisfied.

1 29. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 16, wherein the second
2 participant is designated by the first participant.

1 30. The computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 16, wherein the second
2 participant is designated by one or more participants from the plurality of
3 participants.

1 31. A communications device comprising:
2 an interface configured to receive data from a plurality of communications
3 devices and to transmit data to other communications devices; and
4 a mechanism communicatively coupled to the interface and configured to:
5 perform one or more functions, and
6 prior to a failure of the communications device, designate a particular
7 communications device from the plurality of communications
8 devices to perform the one or more functions if any of a set of
9 handover criteria are satisfied.

1 32. The communications device as recited in Claim 31, wherein the one or more
2 functions include initiating and controlling communications between the plurality
3 of communications devices.

1 33. The communications device as recited in Claim 31, wherein the communications
2 device is a wireless communications device and the plurality of communications
3 device is a plurality of wireless communications devices.

1 34. The communications device as recited in Claim 31, wherein the one or more
2 handoff criteria include a request from the communications device.

- 1 35. The communications device as recited in Claim 31, wherein the one or more
2 handoff criteria include a failure of the communications device.
- 1 36. The communications device as recited in Claim 31, wherein the one or more
2 handoff criteria include the communications device not communicating within a
3 specified period of time.
- 1 37. The communications device as recited in Claim 31, wherein the one or more
2 handoff criteria include the communications device being out of range of one or
3 more of the plurality of communications devices.
- 1 38. The communications device as recited in Claim 31, wherein:
2 the communications device is a master participant, and
3 the particular communications device is an associate master participant.

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